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Chairperson: Mr. Penke ..... (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (A/64/38)

(a) Advancement of women (A/64/79-E/2009/74, A/64/151, A/64/152, A/64/164, A/64/190 and A/64/342)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/64/218)

1. **The Chairperson** drew attention to the draft resolution entitled "Commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" in the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2009 (A/64/3), which had been issued as document A/C.3/64/L.3 for consideration by the Committee.

2. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) observed that the Committee was meeting at a time when the major global threats — conflicts, the economic, energy and food crises and the rise in unemployment, natural disasters and global warming — were having a whirlwind effect on development, and therefore on the well-being of women and girls. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that unemployment could range from 6.1 to 7 per cent for men and 6.5 to 7.4 per cent for women, many of whom remain trapped in insecure jobs and, especially in rural areas, still accounted for the majority of the poor.

3. The financial crisis threatened to reverse gains made with respect to women's health, especially in the developing countries, where essential services like maternal and reproductive health care were inadequate. The health of women and girls was still threatened: according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), one woman died every minute from avoidable obstetrical complications. Yet policies continued to fall short, and many financial barriers remained.

4. While significant progress had been made in narrowing the gender gap in access to basic education, the Millennium Development Goal to achieve primary and secondary education for all by 2005 had been missed. The Millennium Development Report for 2009 showed once again that urgency and commitment were required.

5. HIV/AIDS remained a major challenge to the health and survival of women in the developing countries. Nearly 60 per cent of those infected with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa were women, and adolescent girls were particularly at risk.

6. The Security Council had focused attention on combating rape as a weapon of war and, in addition to resolution 1325 (2000), it had adopted resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) signalling its resolve to ensure that violence against women during armed conflict was eliminated. Yet that kind of violence persisted, and much remained to be done to develop and apply legislation holding the perpetrators accountable. Other forms of sexist violence still existed in all societies, maiming and killing women and girls and depriving them of their basic human rights; such violence was at times rooted in cultures that, often, encouraged it.

7. On the other hand, there had been notable progress in the political empowerment of women and giving them a role in decision-making, as, for example, in Liberia and Rwanda. The achievements were significant because when women held responsible positions, they were able to use their power to address issues affecting women.

8. As the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action approached, it was warranted, despite the advances made, to reflect on whether it was not time for a paradigm shift towards a more integrated approach that involved all stakeholders, including civil society organizations. The adoption of resolution 63/311 by the General Assembly was an indication of the readiness of Member States to be agents of change. The Secretary-General had emphasized that he would move expeditiously to respond to the resolution by encouraging the design of a new, better resourced gender entity with a stronger field presence that would thus be more capable of helping women. The swift decision anticipated would be a reaffirmation of the ideals for which so many had toiled for over 15 years.

9. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that the momentum for action on violence against women was accelerating. The adoption by the General Assembly of resolutions on the

question and the Secretary-General's campaign, "UNiTE to End Violence against Women", had been critical in encouraging initiatives aimed at ending the scourge.

10. She introduced the report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/64/151), which outlined the measures taken in that area by organizations of the United Nations system and highlighted the increased coordination and collaboration among them. The broad range of activities in the field had made violence against women a priority issue within the United Nations system. It was vital to sustain the momentum in order to have a lasting impact, especially by drawing on lessons learned and facilitating the observance of good practices. A better knowledge was needed of the impact of the measures taken and the results achieved.

11. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/64/152), she said that migrant women continued to be subjected to many kinds of discrimination, with undocumented women being particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and discrimination. The report emphasized the need for continued ratification and implementation of international instruments, strengthened legal frameworks, gender-sensitive and rights-based migration policies, continued awareness-raising and prevention efforts, support for the victims, and accelerated data collection and analysis.

12. The Division for the Advancement of Women had continued to expand its work on violence against women. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/143, it had created a database launched on 5 March 2009 by the Deputy Secretary-General. The Division had also developed a handbook on legislation on violence against women. Lastly, the fifth issue of the Division's quarterly electronic newsletter, "Words to Action", featuring measures that Member States and United Nations bodies had taken to address violence against women, had been published.

13. The report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/64/190), which she introduced, indicated that very little had been done on that issue. The report called for investments in both physical and social infrastructure, in employment opportunities and in quality public health-care services, and for intensified efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against rural women. It called for measures giving women and girls with disabilities access to decent employment and ensuring that older women had equal access to basic social services.

14. She introduced the report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/64/218). The Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies had mainstreamed gender perspectives in their own work, giving priority to gender equality and good employment opportunities. Sex-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive indicators and gender-responsive budgeting were essential tools, but they were not being elaborated systematically.

15. The 2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (A/64/93) dealt with the theme of women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources including microfinance, a particularly timely subject in the current period of crisis and very relevant to the Third Committee because it demonstrated the interdependence of economic and social development. A number of intergovernmental events were scheduled for 2010; chief among them would be the 15 year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in March 2010; the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council in July on the theme, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women"; and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in September. In the fall of 2010, the Security Council would be reviewing progress made in the 10 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

16. **Ms. Sandler** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/64/164), observed that, guided by its strategic plan, 2008/2011 (DP/2007/45), the Fund continued to work with Governments, civil society organizations and United Nations partners to integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women in their efforts towards development, peace and security.

17. The previous month, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence, in which it strongly supported consolidating the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) into a composite entity led by an Under-Secretary-General. The Security Council had subsequently adopted resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), in which it requested the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on sexual violence in armed conflict, and to submit a set of globally applicable indicators for monitoring the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The speed and effectiveness with which those decisions were acted upon would reflect the priority given to furthering gender equality and the empowerment of women.

18. The demand from countries for assistance in furthering gender equality and the empowerment of women had been increasing exponentially. The United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, managed by UNIFEM, had received nearly $900 million in requests, but had only $12 million available. It would therefore require more determined partnerships among United Nations organizations, Member States and civil society to meet the growing demands.

19. In order to strengthen the economic security and rights of women, UNIFEM had, in 2008, helped the economic ministries of 71 countries to integrate gender equality into their policies and budgets, especially in the context of financial-sector management reforms and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In Afghanistan, China and the Republic of Moldova, UNIFEM had supported legal and policy reforms to increase women's access to decent work. In Egypt, in partnership with the Government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the World Bank, UNIFEM had helped to put in place a mechanism for directly advancing the economic security of women in concrete ways. That initiative, which included a voluntary certification scheme for private firms in the areas of hiring, training and promoting women, had been built on a similar model in Latin America and could be replicated elsewhere in the country, in the region and worldwide.

20. While the number of partnerships formed and of those benefiting from UNIFEM projects was increasing, other figures were less positive. ILO estimated that 22 million more women could become unemployed as a result of the economic crisis. Moreover, women were too often denied land, property and inheritance rights, and stimulus packages were still primarily based on the male-breadwinner model.

21. The Third Committee resolutions adopted by the General Assembly over the previous three years and the Secretary-General's global campaign had made it possible to combat violence against women more effectively. The number of United Nations country teams reporting joint initiatives to help countries to end such violence, for instance, had increased by 300 per cent. Reaching 56 countries in 2008, UNIFEM had encouraged the implementation of laws and policies, the strengthening of formal and informal justice systems and the consolidation of the security sectors. Nevertheless, the situation left much to be desired. In 2002 alone, for instance, an estimated 150 million girls under 18 had suffered some form of sexual violence, while from 100 to 140 million girls and women had undergone female genital mutilation and were living with its repercussions. That added up to a worldwide pandemic of egregious abuse that urgently demanded a serious, concerted response.

22. In connection with the goal of advancing justice for women in democratic governance, UNIFEM was supporting wide-ranging partnerships in more than 70 countries. However, Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) had been inadequately implemented. The presence of women in the teams of mediators, negotiators or observers participating in peace negotiations was virtually the same as when resolution 1325 (2000) had been adopted. UNIFEM had begun pilot projects to monitor the national action plans to implement the resolution, and that should help to develop a consolidated set of indicators that could be monitored globally.

23. In order to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, UNIFEM was working with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and other partners, national AIDS councils and civil society organizations to institute gender-responsive policies. It had helped integrate gender equality and women's rights into national HIV/AIDS plans in 19 countries. Its work was helping to create a more

conducive environment for addressing the female dimensions of the pandemic, but the results were still unsatisfactory.

24. Concerted action was therefore clearly needed. The gaps and challenges identified in the Secretary-General's note would continue to impede progress. As the 2015 target date neared, UNIFEM was counting on the collaboration of Member States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

25. **Ms. Neuwirth** (Director, New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/64/342), drew attention to section III.B stating that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, established under the Convention, had made headway in reducing the backlog of reports awaiting consideration, which, combined with its strategies to encourage reporting, had resulted in the submission of overdue reports by a number of States parties. The Committee had finalized three communications, one general recommendation (No. 26 on migrant women workers) and four statements, on the subject of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 60, Gaza, the international financial crisis and its consequences for the human rights of women and girls, and gender equality and climate change. Introducing the annual report of the Committee (A/64/38), she noted that it covered the period from October 2008 to February 2009, during which it had held two sessions.

26. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that 2009 and 2010 were particularly important years for women and for the programmes devoted to them because of the many anniversaries of conferences and agreements that would be observed during that period. The reorganization of the gender-equality bodies within the United Nations was also a milestone. Noting with regret that the budget of UNIFEM and the voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund were declining while the demands for support and financing were increasing, she wondered what explained that decline and asked if the attainment of the objectives for the advancement of women was in any way threatened.

27. **Ms. Ellis** (Australia) asked what basic measures should be taken by States to combat the diverse forms of discrimination against women who were members of minority groups, noting that there was a link between the advancement of women and the action taken to combat the violence to which they were subjected. Australia looked forward to a constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in July 2010.

28. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) said that the establishment of a new entity devoted to gender equality should not overshadow the other activities for the advancement of women. He would like to know how Member States and the Secretariat could work jointly to achieve particular results.

29. **Ms. Schlyter** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that it hoped that the composite entity responsible for the advancement of women envisaged in General Assembly resolution 63/311 would be set up rapidly and therefore that the report of the Secretary-General on the matter would be issued before the end of the year. She would like details on how the process was unfolding.

30. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed surprise that the condition of women living under foreign occupation in Palestine, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Golan had not been discussed in the various reports before the Committee, even though her Government had furnished information in that respect in its report for the period 2005-2009. Certainly the question of women living in occupied Territories was addressed in the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict. It would be interesting to know what steps United Nations bodies had taken in that regard. Furthermore, it was not clear why the report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/64/151) had focused exclusively on sexual violence, whereas the report called for in General Assembly resolution 63/155 was to have addressed all forms of violence against women.

31. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) endorsed Sweden's remarks about the composite entity. She wondered if the funding goal for the Trust Fund — $100 million by the year 2015 — was achievable. Also, she would like to know the status of the reports overdue for submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; whether the meetings it held in New York were productive in comparison with those held in Geneva and attracted a satisfactory number of

non-governmental organizations; and if there were plans for increasing its cooperation with other treaty bodies on, for example, questions such as the rights of the child or of persons with disabilities.

32. **Mr. Sammis** (United State of America) said that the Human Rights Council had planned to appoint an independent expert to examine legislation that discriminated against women, an initiative supported by the United States, but that the decision had been simply to prepare a report on relevant action taken by United Nations bodies and to consider the question at the Council's September 2010 session. His delegation wondered what could be done by the United Nations system as a whole and especially by the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council to support the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

33. **Mr. Pournajaf** (Islamic Republic of Iran) observed that the questionnaire on the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action did not include questions about migrant women, human trafficking, the mindset of men and boys, maternity issues, or Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Iran would like to see a comprehensive approach taken, based on justice for women.

34. **Ms. Meymand** (New Zealand) asked what implications the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had had on the work of the bodies responsible for the advancement of women.

35. **Mr. Vimal** (India) asked for more information about what had been done to deal with the backlog in the consideration of reports by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and about how serious the funding difficulties were in relation to efforts for the advancement of women, particularly in the context of the organizational reform. He would also like to know what steps had been taken within the United Nations system to strengthen the role of women in the United Nations.

36. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that the Secretary-General attached great importance to rapid implementation of General Assembly resolution 63/311. A workplan had been established and a proposal should be submitted to the General Assembly before the end of the year. She shared Australia's concern regarding the wide range of the discrimination against women and believed that a more comprehensive approach should be taken to the question. The same applied to gender-mainstreaming initiatives.

37. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that the many forms of discrimination could be combated by means of laws, policies and specific action plans or, failing that, by integrating the issue into the relevant policies. It should be emphasized that the steps taken by States must be specific and that there must be follow-up. The many forthcoming anniversaries and meetings would be an occasion to strengthen the global programme of action and highlight the measures that States had taken. In that connection, one of the goals of establishing a composite entity to deal with women's issues was to strengthen the support the United Nations could provide to countries.

38. Thanking Syria for its comments, she said the information provided in the context of the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had not been used in preparing the reports under consideration but would be used when subsequently preparing regional and global reports on the question.

39. The Division welcomed the fact that meetings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women were held in New York, for they provided an occasion for a direct dialogue. In response to the United States, she regretted that there was no independent expert responsible for examining discriminatory legislation but believed that the different steps the Division was taking in that area would be of assistance to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Committee experts took part in the Division's technical cooperation activities and, as far as possible, in any initiative that fell within their purview.

40. In response to Iran, she pointed out that the Third Committee had before it a report on violence against women migrant workers (A/64/152) and that both the Assistant Secretary-General and the Deputy Director of UNIFEM had dealt with the question of women, peace and security in their statements. Those issues would

also be taken up during the review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2010. Human trafficking and the role of boys and men would be addressed during the preparations for the session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

41. Replying to New Zealand, she said that the Division maintained constructive collaborative relations with the services that dealt with the rights of persons with disabilities within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Division took account of the information provided to it about women with disabilities and referred to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the documents it prepared for intergovernmental bodies.

42. **Ms. Sandler** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said, in response to the questions and comments of Egypt and India, that UNIFEM administered the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women on behalf of the United Nations and that UNIFEM activities and resources and those of the Trust Fund were reported on separately. The financial situation of UNIFEM was good, and its resources had been regularly increasing for 15 years. In particular, the number of Member States making contributions had almost doubled between 2007 and 2008. Even so, the resources were still inadequate to the demand. The decline in contributions to the Trust Fund in the 2008-2009 period was troubling.

43. In response to Chile, the $100-million annual target was ambitious but realistic in view of the fact that contributions had quintupled between 2004 and 2008. The expansion of the Trust Fund was predicated on a greater visibility of the achievements, and the results of the ongoing assessment of the past four years was encouraging. Partnerships with the private sector were also increasing. Unfortunately, all of that was still not enough to deal with the pandemic of violence against women.

44. In response to the representative of India, she acknowledged the need to increase funding for the advancement of women and gender equality across the United Nations system. It was particularly important to increase development assistance and technical assistance to States with a view to ensuring allocation of adequate resources to gender issues.

45. Replying to the representatives of Australia and New Zealand, she said that UNIFEM had always devoted particular attention to the most disadvantaged women and women who were having the greatest difficulty exercising their rights. Documents and meetings relating to particularly vulnerable groups were very useful in that regard. Greater efforts must be made with regard to women with disabilities. Referring to the comments from the representatives of the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, she stressed that joint initiatives, which were increasingly common within the United Nations system, helped promote a comprehensive and integrated approach to the issues of gender equality and the advancement of women.

46. **Ms. Neuwirth** (Director, New York Bureau, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), replying to the representatives of Chile and India, said that as at October 2009, there had been a backlog of 31 reports for consideration by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as compared to 34 at the end of 2007 and 55 at the end of 2005. The Committee considered eight reports per session, or 24 per year. General Assembly resolution 62/218 had authorized the Committee to hold five sessions in 2008 and 2009. It had met three times in 2008 and therefore only twice in 2009, but, beginning in 2010, it would hold three sessions per year. It was difficult to predict how many reports the Committee would have to examine but the number would no doubt increase because States parties were encouraged to submit reports not only to the Committee but also in the context of the universal periodic review.

47. In response to the representative of Chile, she said that holding sessions in New York allowed the Committee to engage in productive discussions with the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and numerous non-governmental organizations. The Committee had followed closely discussions relating to the creation of a new composite entity aimed at strengthening institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, with which it hoped to establish close links and which would be able to take advantage of the Committee's work in many areas. The Committee had also taken steps to strengthen its links

with the United Nations human rights resources in Geneva.

48. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), with regard to the question from the representative of the United States of America, noted that the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of women in the United Nations system was submitted every two years; the next report would therefore be submitted in 2010.

49. As for the difficulty in recruiting women, she said that recruitment at the beginning of the career path was easy, in particular through the competitive examinations, where women enjoyed the same success rate as men. A meeting of experts held in the context of preparation of the report, to review the working conditions of women in the Organization as compared to conditions elsewhere, had concluded that the Organization had difficulty retaining women at the P-3 and P-4 levels because they had opportunities for promotion outside the Organization, they did not necessarily wish to be employed for life in the Organization, or because mobility was encouraged. The Organization did not sufficiently guarantee a work-life balance in the various duty stations, in particular with regard to employment for spouses and education for children. Efforts to recruit women did not take into account the reality of the current labour market, which was highly competitive and offered women more advantageous conditions.

50. The Organization must make an effort to attract women, in particular at the higher levels, and to retain them in its service, by giving them opportunities for promotion within the international civil service. The experience of UNFPA and UNICEF had shown that support at the highest level was a determining factor and she therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's commitment to increasing the participation of women within the United Nations system.

51. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that she had not found the reply from the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women very enlightening. In 2008 she had asked the same question following the Director's statement, at which time the Director had said that only information provided by States was reflected in the report. With regard to the current report the Director had given a different response. Information provided on the situation of women in the occupied territories was not reflected in the current report.

52. Paragraph 7 of the report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/64/151) stated that one of the five key outcomes of the framework for activities by multiple stakeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels was systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations and to protect women and girls against rape. She wondered why only sexual violence and rape were mentioned. The resolution was from the General Assembly, not the Security Council. The Secretary-General's campaign must be worldwide, take into account all forms of violence and not limit itself to certain situations of interest to certain countries, or to rape or sexual violence. The Beijing Platform for Action did not limit itself to sexual violence.

53. She asked the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women whether the new composite entity would address the situation of women in the occupied territories who were victims of violence, because the international community must meet its obligations towards those women. Their situation was a problem that should concern not only Governments but the international community as a whole.

54. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women) said that the current report of the Secretary-General (A/64/151) was based on information provided by United Nations agencies, not information provided by Member States. However, due to the biennial system of report preparation, the report that had been submitted in 2008 (A/63/214 and Corr.1) had reflected mainly information provided by Member States.

55. Paragraph 7 of the current report contained a description of a framework for the activities of the multiple stakeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels in the context of the Secretary-General's campaign entitled "UNiTE to End Violence against Women", which was aimed at combating all forms of violence. The fifth outcome of the framework dealt specifically with sexual violence in conflict situations because it was a particularly grave problem that was likewise linked to the issue of impunity.

56. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that the new

composite entity would deal with all issues related to gender and the advancement of women and no women would be forgotten. The new entity would respect the mandates of each of the institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The situation of women in the occupied territories would likewise be addressed.

57. **Ms. Gabr** (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) underscored the importance of fruitful collaboration between the Committee and other bodies established pursuant to human rights instruments, and with the mechanisms and agencies of the United Nations in New York. She welcomed the General Assembly's decision to establish an entity intended to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. That entity should enter into a dialogue with the Committee and take advantage of its rich experience in the areas of follow-up and monitoring of legally binding commitments, without which it would be impossible to achieve the objectives relating to women's rights. At its next session the Committee would consider how to promote effective cooperation with the new entity, with a view to strengthening implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

58. Replying to the representative of Australia, she said that the Committee was in the process of drafting a general recommendation applicable to all forms of discrimination, both current and future.

59. There were 186 States parties to the Convention and 98 States parties to its Optional Protocol; 55 States had accepted the amendment to article 28, paragraph 1, of the Convention. The Committee welcomed General Assembly resolution 62/218 authorizing it to hold, beginning in January 2010, three three-week sessions every year, with each session preceded by a one-week working group. That would enable it to continue reducing the backlog of reports, consider reports in a timely manner and monitor implementation of the Convention in States parties whose reports were overdue.

60. The Committee had requested 20 States parties whose reports were long overdue to submit them by a specific date, failing which it would consider the implementation of the Convention in those States parties in the absence of a report; as a result six of those States had submitted a report. At its forty-third session, the Committee had for the first time reviewed the implementation of the Convention in a State party that had not submitted a report, although a delegation from that State had been present. The Committee would continue to explore ways to help States parties meet their reporting obligations, in particular by suggesting that they request technical assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner or other United Nations entities.

61. The Committee had worked hard to make concrete country-specific recommendations. It had introduced a follow-up procedure whereby it included in its concluding observations a request for the State party to provide information within one or two years on measures adopted to implement selected recommendations. That procedure would be evaluated in 2011. At its forty-fourth session the Committee had decided to appoint a Rapporteur for follow-up.

62. The close links between the Committee and the intergovernmental machinery responsible for the promotion of gender equality had been maintained following the transfer of the Committee's secretariat services to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in January 2008. Those links included cooperation between the Committee and intergovernmental bodies and special procedure mandate holders, as well as participation in international events, for example the Durban Review Conference held in April 2009 in Geneva.

63. The Committee contributed actively to the work of the human rights treaty bodies, in particular in the context of the Annual Meeting of Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies as well as the Inter-Committee Meetings.

64. The Committee found joint information provided by United Nations country teams relating to countries whose reports were before the Committee to be a valuable resource and encouraged United Nations entities to expand that practice. Non-governmental organizations continued to play an important role in the work of the Committee and the contribution of national human rights institutions continued to increase significantly.

65. The Committee had maintained its practice of adopting statements pertaining to particular events. In January 2009 it had adopted a declaration on the serious violations of women's rights in Gaza; at its

forty-fourth session it had adopted a statement on gender and climate change.

66. Discrimination and violence against women caused by patriarchal attitudes continued to be the principal obstacles to implementation of the Convention at the national level. Although considerable progress had been made, in particular with regard to legislation, policies and programmes, owing to the Convention and the mechanisms for its implementation, the potential of the Convention system had not been fully exploited because of lack of visibility and accessibility and resource constraints. The Committee deplored continuing violence against women in armed conflict situations and welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1888 (2009), in which the Council reiterated its intention, when adopting or renewing targeted sanctions in situations of armed conflict, to consider including, where appropriate, designation criteria pertaining to acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention and the tenth anniversary of its Optional Protocol would be observed in 2009. The international community should work to raise the visibility of those instruments and strengthen their effectiveness in combating all forms of discrimination against women. The Committee's ultimate goal was to increase the number of ratifications of both instruments and encourage States parties to withdraw any reservations thereto.

67. **Mr. Lidén** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, commended the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for its work. The European Union was committed to implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the principles of which remained relevant 30 years after its adoption. States parties should review their reservations and withdraw any reservation contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention.

68. The European Union was deeply concerned by the persistence of discriminatory laws against women and girls, despite the pledge made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, aimed at modifying or abolishing such laws. The elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, crimes which were very common yet rarely punished, was of the highest priority for the European Union. All States should amend their legislation or adopt new legislation with a view to ensuring that violence against women was criminalized and perpetrators were brought to justice. Rape as a weapon of war constituted a war crime. States that had not yet signed and ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which clearly categorized that particular violation of women's rights in time of war as a crime against humanity, should do so.

69. Women had a major role to play in reconstruction and consolidating peace; efforts must therefore be redoubled to strengthen the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), supported by all branches of the Organization. Accountability must be established. The Organization must strengthen its capacity to gather information about cases of sexual violence and meet the needs of victims.

70. No society could achieve its full potential for economic and social development unless women were able to participate fully in the life of that society. He expressed concern at the lack of improvement in the area of maternal health. It was unacceptable that 500,000 women died every year of causes related to pregnancy or childbirth. Early marriage, female genital mutilation, violence and honour crimes and other harmful practices were incompatible with the rights set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The European Union reaffirmed its strong support for full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and emphasized that gender equality could not be achieved without guaranteeing women's right to reproductive and sexual health.

71. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women was a vital part of the Organization's mandate. The European Union therefore welcomed the General Assembly's decision to create a composite entity with a view to strengthening the United Nations system's gender architecture for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It would work with other Member States for the establishment of that entity in the hope of

concluding the intergovernmental process by the first quarter of 2010 at the latest.

72. **Ms. Abdelrahman** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the current global financial and economic crisis had increased the burden placed on the countries of the South and undermined their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. Despite the significant progress made towards ending all forms of discrimination against women, Governments lacked resources to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls.

73. The international community should address the issue of the rights of women living under foreign occupation, guarantee respect for their inalienable rights and ensure that those who violated their rights were prosecuted and punished.

74. Women made a significant contribution to economic and social development and she expressed concern that as a result of the current crises, the commitment of the international community and donor countries to development might weaken, which could lead to greater inequalities, condemning women to poverty and the role of head of household without having access to productive activities. It was therefore important that the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development be rigorously implemented.

75. Education was the best tool for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Group of 77 and China underscored the importance of South-South cooperation initiatives aimed at combating illiteracy. It also recognized the importance of international cooperation in mobilizing resources and strengthening capacity for long-term projects aimed at strengthening the empowerment of rural women and promoting their participation in decision-making.

76. She commended the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) for its work but expressed grave concern that a new Director of the Institute still had not been appointed.

77. She commended the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its partners for their ongoing efforts to improve the health of rural populations, in particular women, and also commended UNIFEM and its partners for their efforts to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and young girls.

78. Appropriate measures must be adopted to address the negative impacts of the current food, energy, climate change, financial and economic crises on women and girls. Stimulus packages must take into account the needs and the contributions of women and the international community must help build the capacity of the developing countries in preparing gender-responsive budgets. The Organization must likewise do more to promote gender balance and balanced geographical representation.

79. **Mr. Matenje** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), associated himself with the statement made by Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Southern African Development Community was committed to promoting the empowerment of women and gender equality and was working to increase awareness of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and translate its provisions into concrete and measurable progress.

80. Violence against women and girls had a negative effect on achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. He therefore welcomed United Nations initiatives to draw attention to violations of women's fundamental rights, establish a network of men leaders to spearhead advocacy and action at the community, national, regional and global levels and mobilize men and boys in efforts to promote to gender equality.

81. He welcomed the launch of the Secretary-General's database on violence against women, which, if constantly updated by all States and concerned stakeholders, would allow them to learn from each other with a view to better protecting women against violence.

82. The phenomenon of trafficking in persons, a modern form of slavery and violence against women and children, was a growing problem in the SADC region, largely as a result of war, pandemic poverty, minimal access to health and education, gender inequality and unemployment. In order to deal with that problem, in cooperation with the African Union, international entities and civil society organizations, the Community had developed a plan of action based on the relevant international and African instruments.

83. He expressed concern that despite an increase in contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence against

Women, the Fund still did not have sufficient resources to meet the demands made on it.

84. He acknowledged the commendable work of UNIFEM and welcomed the initiative to merge it with other specialized entities with a view to establishing a composite entity responsible for gender equality. SADC would do whatever was necessary to ensure the entity was established and provided with sufficient resources. It would continue to do everything possible to achieve the objective of equality between men and women in political life and at all levels of decision-making.

85. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), associated herself with the statement made by Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The CARICOM States had been hard-hit by the multiple current crises, which had resulted in a reduction in exports and commodity prices, a drop in remittances and tourist income and a contraction in capital flows. Notwithstanding those challenges CARICOM States had spared no effort in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and combating violence against women.

86. Incremental progress was being made in such areas as education and health care; for example women outnumbered men in secondary schools and higher education. Empowerment of women had not, however, progressed a great deal; positions of power and decision-making continued to be dominated by men and inequality between men and women persisted in the labour market. Measures had been adopted to promote the development of the social and health programmes that took into account problems linked to the situation of women, but as a result of culture, lifestyle and gender roles in society, HIV/AIDS continued to spread in the region.

87. Overall participation of women in the political life and decision-making had not improved because the States of the region had not adopted laws establishing quotas for women's participation in politics. The Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership had been established in Barbados in July 2008 with a view to increasing the number of women in politics and decision-making.

88. In order to combat sexual violence, the countries of the region had implemented plans of action, with a completion date of 2015, launched research, advocacy and education initiatives and worked to improve State accountability and the dissemination of statistical information.

89. She expressed concern at the shortfall in contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women but welcomed the initiative to create a single entity within the United Nations devoted to matters concerning gender equality, which should be robust and provided with adequate resources.

90. Rural women played a significant role in agriculture, food production and community development. She therefore called for an end to unfair competition and agricultural trade distortions, which directly affected women, and also called for the establishment of an inclusive international economic system.

91. At the national level greater efforts must be made to guarantee women's right to land and access to credit, technology and information. That would help reduce poverty and improve food security. Consideration should likewise be given to the idea of providing positive incentives to Governments and private institutions that promoted gender equality and protected women's rights.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.